RFP ED-MC268001
Q&A #2
Revised 11/7/08

The following are answers to a list of questions that we have received for the above mentioned RFP. This Q&A is in addition to the Q&A list that was posted on October 21, 2008. These questions were received between October 21, 2008 and November 7, 2008 . These questions and answers are current as of noon on November 7, 2008.

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QUESTION: Does my company need to be registered with your organization or with a different state entity in order to bid on this? If so, is that something I can do online?

ANSWER: No, your computer does not need to be registered to bid on this.

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1. Do test items referred to in Section D.2 already exist of will they be created by the contractor (vendor)?

ANSWER: Created by the contractor/vendor.

2. Will IDOE pursue and secure copyright permissions and releases for all videos used in the course or will the contractor (vendor) obtain them?

ANSWER: That will be decided at a later date. If the vendor has experience in this area, we may have the vendor pursue those permissions.

3. Will IDOE provide subject matter experts (SMEs) to address content-specific questions or is the contractor (vendor) expected to employ SMEs?

ANSWER: The IDOE will provide the content and the experts to address the content specific questions.

4. Does IDOE currently have a license for a SQL server to host this class?

ANSWER: We have no license for this specific program at this time.

5. Can proposals be submitted via email?

ANSWER: Since this wasn't addressed specifically in the RFP, an email submission will be accepted; however we prefer to have 3 hard copies sent to us.

QUESTION:

I would like to know whether the proposal submission to you has to be made only on e-mail or we have to also submit a hard copy by 10th November. If a hard copy is required, could you please let me know the address that it has to be couriered to.

ANSWER:
I would prefer to have three hard copies. Those can be mailed to me at
the following address:

Grimes Building
400 E 14th
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

QUESTION:
How much time we would have to submit examples of the proposed program if we are shortlisted after review of the written proposals.

ANSWER:
I want to keep this project moving along, so I'm hoping to have the shortlist determined by January 1, 2009. Examples would have to be submitted very shortly thereafter. I would want to see an example of what you can provide no later than 15 days after the shortlisting date.

QUESTION:
Can you let me know approximately how much time (days or weeks) one
would get to submit the examples after shortlisting. That is, if the
shortlist is released on January 1st 2009, then the deadline for
examples submission for shorlisted candidates would be approximately by
what date?

ANSWER:
I would want to see an example of what you can provide no later than 15
days after the shortlisting date.

QUESTION:
Also, I wanted to clarify, your answer to q.no. 1.3.2 where we have asked The new training program should be approximately (_____ hours) of learning. We actually mean how many hours of online learning?

ANSWER:
I understand from research that when you take an instructor led class and change it into an online class, the actual class time, even though it contains the same amount of information, is usually reduced by a certain percentage - some have told me up to a 25% reduction. Assuming that is correct, our current 12-hour class would then become a 9 hour class of online learning.

QUESTION:
The content description mentioned on the last
page of the RFP has several films mentioned. Could you let me know what
is the total approximate time of video content (films) in the current
classroom training program.

ANSWER:
I believe it's in the 4 1/2 to 5 hour range.

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1. Do you have an existing Learning Management System you will need this to tie into, or will this be a standalone product?

ANSWER: Most likely it will be a standalone product.

2. Will each user require a unique log-in? How do those log-ins need to be created? By the user? By an admin? By tying into an existing database? What information will be required to create a new user (First name, Last Name, SSN, Birth date, etc.)?

ANSWER: Yes, each user will require a unique log-in, created by the user. Information will include but may not be limited to first and last name, and SSN.

3. What level of interactivity is required? For example, will there be animations, videos, audio, etc.? Or will the user read information and then answer questions? What types of questions will there be (T/F, Multiple Choice, Essay)?

ANSWER: Ideally, we would like to see some of all of the above. With as long of course as this will be, it should probably be changed up here and there to keep it interesting to the user.

4. Is there a rep at IDOE we could speak to about connecting to their system to integrate the information into it?

ANSWER: Yes we have a rep. However we also have a Q&A at the RFP location that addresses many of these issues.

5. How will you need the results posted (do you require SCORM compliant assessments, results to be posted to server, emailed, etc.)?

ANSWER: A DTS or SSIS package would be preferred.

6. Based on your request for interactivity, may we recommend the use of Adobe Flash to enhance the user's experience? Do you have a preference on this?

ANSWER: We have no preference. Whatever would work best with your system to give the user the best experience will be considered upon your recommendation.

7. What type of server will this system reside on? Windows, Linux, Dedicated, Shared hosted, etc.?

ANSWER: The database is SQL Server 7. Plans are to upgrade to SQL Server 2005.

GENERAL
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1. How would prefer the proposal be submitted -- postal mailing of the printed document or as an email attachment (e.g. Word or PDF format)?

ANSWER: Postal mailing - with a preference for 3 copies (3 copies not required however)

2. If you prefer a paper document, how many copies would you like? Would like them paper-clipped, stapled, bound or in a binder...or loose? (Proposals are often requested to be submitted loose for ease of photocopying, thus my question.)

ANSWER: Would like 3 copies, but not required. Preferably in a binder.

3. Please confirm: you do NOT want URL or CD samples unless requested AFTER the written proposal review, is that correct?

ANSWER: That is correct. However, if you normally would provide a link to a demo or enclose a CD, please don't veer away from your normal proposal process by not providing those items. If enclosed, we will look at them.

TECHNICAL
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1. Regarding the request for the ability to automatically update your training server, what sort of database, server (including operating system) and configuration is used for the Iowa training server? What access to the schema and internals of the database would we be given?

ANSWER: The database is SQL Server 7. Plans are to upgrade to SQL Server 2005. I would assume that access would be granted via working with one of our internal techs to accommodate whatever needs you have.

2. In Section B, please elaborate on "...allowing the agency full access to the database." Do you mean viewing/editing data in the database via the administrative system interface we design? Or do you mean actual direct access to the system's database file itself?

ANSWER: Viewing and editing data via the admin system you design.

3. Will student workstations permit cookies to be stored?

ANSWER: Students will be working from various types of workstations including but not limited to home computers, school classroom computers, and work office computers. I assume any or all could permit cookies.

#1 Can the government tell us how much "new" multi-media content expected to be developed by the vendor? Our current assumption is that it may require up to 30min of new multi-media content per 1 hour course. In which case 50% of the current content may re-developed using new multi-media content and made available in each course. Is this a valid assumption? If this is not, please provide us with the IDOE ideas and expectations.

ANSWER: The current curriculum was included just as an example of what we are doing now. We would anticipate following the current curriculum, but it doesn't necessarily have to be followed to the letter. Some of our current content is outdated, so we realize those parts would have to be changed. Having said that, I would say that your assumption that 50% of the current content needing to be re-developed is a valid assumption.

#2 We're making the assumption that all current material used in the courses (presentations, existing video, etc.) will be integrated into the new Learning Management Platform. Should 100% of existing content be integrated to the learning mgmt platform in addition to the new multi-media content? If not, what percentage of existing content is expected to be re-used in the new Learning Management Platform?

ANSWER: As mentioned in question #1, 50% would be a reasonable assumption.

#3 Is the vendor required to provide a Fixed price bid for the development of the course content?

ANSWER: Yes

This questionnaire will help us draft an accurate solution that addresses your training needs. Please highlight or key your responses as appropriate.

1. General

    1.1. Needs and Objectives

        1.1.1. What is the business need of the course?

- ☐ **Develop new knowledge and skills necessary to enable employees to perform their day-today work**
- ☐ Improve productivity by enhancing employees' performance (time management, for example), personal development where the course is not directly related to the employees' present job
- ☐ **Mandatory requirement for compliance with a regulatory body**
- ☐ *Other (please elaborate)*

    1.2. When do you need the program?

- ☐ Within 3 months
- ☐ Within 6 months

- ☐ Within 1 year
- ☐ *To be decided- target date of August 1, 2009*

    1.2.1.1. Will this be the first e-learning initiative?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

1.3. Estimated Length of Course

    1.3.1.   If the training is currently instructor-led, it takes approximately (*12 hours*) to deliver the content.

    1.3.2.   The new training program should be approximately (*10-12 hours*) of learning.

2. Target Audience

2.1. How would you classify learners' skill and proficiency levels in relation to the subject matter?
- ☐ **Low – these are brand new school bus drivers**
- ☐ Medium
- ☐ High

2.2. What is the current number of end users and projected annual growth? The size of user base should help us provide a more appropriate solution. **Approximately 900-1000 users each year. Assuming we like the program and how it works, we may look at this for use in our yearly 3-hour update class which would generate approximately 10,000 users.**

2.3. Where are trainees located?
- ☐ **Widely scattered**
- ☐ Local

2.4. Pl provide some information about the learners:
- ☐ Age:
- ☐ Educational background:
- ☐ Ethnicity:
- ☐ Computer- / elearning-savvy:
- ☐ They cover every demographic line. **Age 18-70; male and female; high school to PHD's, etc**

3. Technical

3.1. Provide Details of the current network infrastructure especially the IDOE training database. This will help us explore and suggest means to integrate the LMS database with your database and enable automated update of records.

The database is SQL Server 7. Plans are to upgrade to SQL Server 2005.

3.2. Besides the above are there any other applications to which the LMS is required to be integrated with?

A DTS or SSIS package would be preferred.

3.3. Connection Speed - What connectivity is available to the end user?

- ☐ Modem (56Kbps, 128Kbps or 256 Kbps)
- ☐ ADSL/DSL or cable modem
- ☐ LAN - low bandwidth
- ☐ LAN - high bandwidth
- ☐ **Probably all**

3.4. What are the minimum end-user machine specifications that must be supported?

- ☐ Processor Type and speed (e.g. P-III, 450 MHz or above): ▁▁▁
- ☐ RAM (e.g. 256 MB, 512 MB): ▁▁▁
- ☐ Operating System (e.g. Windows XP, etc.): ▁▁▁
- ☐ Internet Browser (e.g. Internet Explorer v. 5.5/6 etc.): ▁▁▁
- ☐ Internet Browser Plug-ins supported (e.g. Flash v. 8, Shockwave, etc.): ▁▁▁
- ☐ **I'm not sure how to answer this as the end-users will be doing the class from wherever they are located. We won't have a central location for them to take the class from, but rather they can take it from anywhere.**

3.5. Would the course need to adhere to any accessibility standards (Section 508, etc.)?

Not that I'm aware of, but that is a possibility. All of the students will be school bus drivers, so the degree of disabilities should be fairly slight.

4. Visual Design

4.1. Do you have a preference for:

- ☐ Illustrations
- ☐ Photographs
- ☐ Video
- ☐ Audio
- ☐ **All of the above.**

QUESTION:
It is mentioned in the RFP document that the current bus driver training course content is available on VHS/DVD, Powerpoint Slides etc. Will it be possible for you to make this course content available to us before the proposal submission deadline?

ANSWER:

The course content is found at the end of the RFP.

QUESTION:
Is electronic submission allowed for proposals? We have found this to be a Greener method of delivering proposals (as opposed to the carbon emissions of postal services). However, if you require paper copies, we will certainly accomodate.

ANSWER:
I prefer to have 3 hard copies

QUESTION:
How many participants would there be at any given time?

ANSWER:
In answer to your question, I have no idea. We would have about 1000 participants over the course of a year - but I have no idea as to "any given time" as drivers are hired at all times of the year.

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1) Are you accepting bids from firms that are out of area? If so, are you putting preference on local bidders?

ANSWER: Yes, we are accepting bids from out of our area, and no, we are not putting preference on local bidders. We are simply looking for the best product at the best price.

2) In order to provide an accurate estimate of needs, can you provide an approximate budget for the requested services?

ANSWER: I have not been given a solid budget number yet at this time.

3) Are their existing Brand/promotional materials such as brochure, logo, etc. for your business/organization? If so, can you provide website URL? If not, can you provide references to (websites, exhibits, brochures, logos) that are similar the look and feel you are seeking?

ANSWER:
http://www.iowa.gov/educate/

QUESTIONS:
1. Can you give us an idea of target audience demographics (i.e. age, gender, level of education, etc.)?
2. Is 70% OK for the passing score, or do you have a different requirement?
3. Do you have a Learning Management System (LMS), or do you intend to implement one in the near future?

4. The RFP mentions Iowa's Information Technology standards and guidelines. Does this refer to a specific document? Is it the same as the Information Technology Operational Standards used by Iowa's Dept. of Administrative Services?
5. Will students be able to complete this training from their home computers?
6. Is there any particular model or type of school bus the training will be focused on?

ANSWERS:

1. All new school bus drivers, and they cross every demographic line. Age 18-70; male and female; high school to PHD's, etc.

2. We've not made that decision yet.

3. Not sure what you mean by LMS? Please explain. That sounds like something that we might be interested in incorporating into our proposed training system.

4. I would assume it's the same as used by DAS. As to specific systems and software that we use, that can be found in the aforementiond Q&A.

5. Yes

6. That decision hasn't been made, but most likely a type C school bus as that is the most popular model in use.

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1. Does the existing 12 hour classroom training consist of 4 - 4.5 hours of video training plus the 8 hours of facilitated training? Is this training over a two day period?

ANSWER: Yes to the number of hours and how they are used. As to how long the training takes, currently the training is offered in many time formats - one day; two days, three days, and four days.

2. Normally, when you convert an 8 hour classroom training program, the online version can be condensed into a 5 hour online experience. In order to provide all of the vendors with a common criteria, should the vendor's submit a price per finished hour rather than a single total price? One vendor might submit an 8 hour solution, another a 6.5 hour solution and another a 5 hour solution. This way you have a consistent criteria in which to judge all of the vendors. You should receive a fixed price hourly rate plus the learning management system rate.

ANSWER: That sounds like a reasonable idea. But since we didn't state it in the original RFP and some vendors may not come back to look at the Q&A, it can't be a requirement at this time to propose it to us on per hour basis. That may be a follow up question we may ask of all vendors following receipt of their proposals.

3 The RFP mentioned that the solution will need to be in conformance with the State's security guidelines. Will this guideline be made available to the vendors?

ANSWER: Go to where our RFP is located online and you will find a Q&A giving all of the system, software, and security guideline information.

4. A learning management system will meet all of your data transfer requirements, privacy, printing reports and much more of your needs. Is there a reason why the RFP provided such emphasis on the database? As long as the learning management system can pass the required data to the State's database, is that sufficient?

ANSWER: Yes, I would think that should be sufficient.

1. For the purposes of pricing our bid accurately, can you provide an estimate for the number of employees the system will be training?

ANSWER: Approximately 1000 each year.

2. I noticed on the RFP an online of current training curriculum. We currently have several courses the fit nicely into that plan. Just wondering if we need to follow this directly when putting together our package.

ANSWER: The current training curriculum was given as just an example and outline of what we currently do. We most likely will want to retain a good share of that in a new curriculum, but it wouldn't have to be the exact same stuff. If you have something that addresses those areas, we'd like to see what you have.

3. The RFP suggests the first year can be used to develop the program with the possibility of expanding from new drivers to all drivers. That being said, is the RFP for year 1 only?

ANSWER: The RFP is for one year only depending on how satisfied we are with the system, service, etc. If we are satisfied, we would then look to future years.

4. Will the program be used for refresher training in year 1? How many employees estimate?

ANSWER: No. We don't anticipate using it for refresher training for at least several years. When that happens, there will be approximately 9500-10,000 students yearly. We want to get the new driver training established before we move on to yearly training for all drivers.

QUESTION:

Regarding the Web Based School Bus Driver Training System, is a budget amount you have in mind for the project?

ANSWER:
I've not been given a specific budget amount.

QUESTION:
I know that is hard for you to answer and you want the best for the money but a ball park figure of total budget to better frame the expectation would be very helpful.

ANSWER:
I've not actually been given a budget for this project. I've been given a range, but I really don't want to share that as current economic conditions could change that without any prior notification to me.

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1. As this is expected to be about 12 hours of training, are the students already CDL class B holders?

ANSWER: They will be holders of chauffeur's licenses as well as CDL class A, B & C licenses.   A bus of less than 16 passengers does not require a CDL.

2. Is there a driving component or some hands on elements in the training outside of these 12 hours?

ANSWER: There will be no driving component in a vehicle, but there will be a "face to face" component with an instructor. We anticipate this part of the training to be in the area of 2-3 hours, which will be completed after the web-based component.

3. Is the training conducted at a school site or at their homes and the RFP talks about 24/7 which would imply this is an individual, asynchronous program that must be self contained without   instructor intervention?

ANSWER: That is correct. This training will be conducted on an individual basis wherever the student can access a computer.

4. Can you describe the typical student or the range of student backgrounds?

ANSWER: The students cross all demographic lines: all ages, all genders, a complete range of education, etc.

5. Given the fairly short amount of time for development, do you have a preference as to modifying an existing program or do you expect a new program tailored to IOWA needs?

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1. Are you requiring that the entire 4-1/2 hours of current video training be converted to streaming video or only a portion (or none), the rest being converted to interactive eLearning?

ANSWER: NO - that is simplly a starting point. To use those videos we will need to get license permission, which can be quite costly. I also know that converting it to streaming video can be costly as well. Probably converting the content to interactive learning would be a good solution. But to say we've settled on one or the other at this point - no, we haven't.

2. What are your on-site training and/or support requirements?

ANSWER: Not sure what you are asking here? Take a look at our Q&A that I mentioned earlier and maybe that will answer this question. If not, let me know exactly what you are asking.

3. What are your helpdesk requirements? How do you anticipate eLearning to be delivered? (online from user's location, at DOE office) What is the computer literacy of your new school bus drivers?

ANSWER: We expect it to be delivered online from the user's location. As to computer literacy, it's a real cross section - some will have excellent computer literacy while other's may not have ever used a computer in their life.

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1. Has the agency conducted a market study of available training systems that offers web based learning management system? If yes, can the Agency provide the market study evaluation, description report of its findings?

ANSWER: No we haven't. We've observed several available systems at trade shows, but have not done any type of market study evaluation.

2. Has the agency conducted a market study of available web-based school bus driver training content – in the form of multi-media course-ware or other forms that can be made available through a web based learning management system? If yes, can the agency provide the market study evaluation, description report of its findings?

ANSWER: Same as answer to question #1.

3. How many administrator users are expected to use the system? It is anticipated that both the Central Agency staff and School District level staff would require some level of administrator privilege to the system. Please provide a count of those types of users. If the agency anticipates multiple types of administrator users, please provide a break-down per user type.

ANSWER: We anticipate at least 2-3 administrators at the agency level, with no administrative access at the local school district level. They (the local district) would contact us with any questions or requests for reports.

<u>**COMMENT:**</u>
We would be glad to schedule an onsite demonstration with you and other key players.

<u>**ANSWER:**</u>
We are currently asking for proposals. We will only be scheduling demonstrations with organizations that have submitted a proposal and gone through the evaluation process.

<u>**QUESTION:**</u>
Would you require payment processing on the site & site registration? This is a very easy function that would come along with complete registration & payment processing on the site.

<u>**ANSWER:**</u>
It's something we would consider.

- how many school bus drivers are there in Iowa?

<u>**ANSWER:**</u> Approximately 10,000

- how many bus rivers will be trained?

<u>**ANSWER:**</u> Approximately 900-1000

- how quickly would you like the bus drivers to be certified?

<u>**ANSWER:**</u> Not sure exactly what you are asking, but we would like to begin this format on August 1, 2009. The drivers would then need to take this course and be certified prior to driving a school bus.

- what is the motivation behind the RFQ? for instance, have there been incidents with bus drivers in Iowa that have prompted
  the desire for new training and certification? or, might the reason be that it's quicker and less expensive to do this online?

<u>**ANSWER:**</u> Our prime motivation is consistency of training; ability to update our curriculum more quickly; training being more readily available 24/7; and to add a testing element to our training.

- you mentioned VHS tapes in your RFQ. can you send us copies of these tapes?

ANSWER: If you are chosen as our vendor, then we would furnish you with all of our current materials.

- what integration requirements to you anticipate? for example, you state in the RFQ that favorable consideration will be give to
  vendors who can link to the IDOE training database and automatically upload student records. are there other integration needs?

ANSWER: None that we anticipate.

- can you describe the technology behind the IDOE database? for example, is it an Oracle database, SQL, MySQL? does the IDOE
  database reside behind a firewall? can you describe the security requirements to connect to the IDOE database?

ANSWER: The database is SQL Server 7. Plans are to upgrade to SQL Server 2005. A DTS or SSIS package would be preferred for transfer. Not sure about the firewall, but I assume we have one.

- is there a bus driver training 'set aside' in Iowa?

ANSWER: Define "set aside"?

-    is this initiative considered in-service training?

ANSWER: Yes

QUESTION:
Will you be offering an extension on submission of the RFP proposals beyond the November 10, 2008 deadline?

ANSWER:
No extensions will be offered. This RFP has been posted since late September and we want to keep moving on it.